



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Isiah Leggett  
County Executive

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Director

COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2015

**CITIZEN MEMBERS PRESENT:** Shehzad Akhtar, Maria Blaeuer, Carole Brown, Linda Currie, Bonnie DeWitt, Chris Fogleman (Vice-Chair), Michael Gruenberg, Barbara Holtz, Stacey Gurian–Sherman, Mehul Madia, Perry Paylor, Erynn Penn, Roberta (Birdie) Pieczenik, Carlean Ponder (Chair) , Wendy Pulliam, Jessa Wilcox and Tisha Wiley.

**AGENCY MEMBERS PRESENT:** Francha Davis, Susan Farag, Captain James Humphries, Mary Siegfried, Michael Subin, Jenny West-Porter, Elijah Wheeler and Carlotta Woodward for Amy Bills.

**ABSENT MEMBERS:** Linda Currie, Frank Duncan, Karen Francis, Risa Mainprize, Julie Malloy, Jessica Markham, Dana Pisanelli and Ira Thomas,

**STAFF LIAISON PRESENT:** Diane Lininger

**GUESTS:** Karyn Gross, Matt Paris, Margi Josh and Evan Glass

Commission on Juvenile Justice

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facsimile

- I. **Speakers** – Evan Glass, Executive Director of Ghandi Brigade Youth Media. The Commission watched a short 8 minute documentary video put together by Glass's group, the Ghandi Brigade Youth Media, a free after school program in Silver Spring. The video focused on the juvenile justice system and was created based on interest from the group about the riots in Baltimore and "Black Lives Matter" discussions. The seven African American young men that were members of the group met Monday through Friday, five hours a day for five weeks over the summer to put together the documentary. The young men are mostly of Ethiopian or East African descent. They received a modest stipend to encourage them to attend. The students conducted the interviews themselves and found the relevant sound bites. Glass said the topic was very personal to them and they explored many issues that could not get into an 8-minute documentary. The program hopes to move into space provided by the Silver Spring library. The documentary will be shown to churches and aired in different schools. The group's video was well received by the Commission. Mike Gruenberg commended Glass on his group's work and said that the Commission would be happy to help Glass's organization any way it could. Carlean added that the Commission would like to see programs like the Ghandi Brigade supported and expanded.

II. **Announcements**

- A. Carlean Ponder discussed her meeting with the Health and Human Services Committee of the County Council. She testified about the work the Commission was doing. Councilmembers George Leventhal and Roger Berliner were very interested in learning about the work the Commission was doing with school vocational programs. Carlean also noted that the Maryland Department of Education came to speak before the Council and they discussed the need to maintain funding for prevention programs. The Councilmembers showed a lot of interest in this issue and asked a lot of questions.
- B. Carlean stated that at the November meeting, Delegate Kathleen Dumais and a representative from Senator Jamie Raskin's office will be in attendance to discuss upcoming juvenile justice legislation. Diane Lininger added that if anyone had any questions or topics for discussions to please send them to her before the November meeting so she can forward them to the speakers.
- C. On November 24, the Commission members will be touring the Thomas Edison High school of Technology in Silver Spring. This is the Commission's second tour of Thomas Edison. Carlean noted at the school has a new principal and they are working to expand access to its vocational programs to students who might not have previously qualified. Carlean added that the Commission would like to see vocational programs expanded to other schools outside of Edison. Stacey Gurian-Sherman asked whether there were alternative tour dates

available. Karen Gross from MCPS replied they regularly have tours, the dates of which are on school's website.

- D. At the January meeting, Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services Sam Abed will be the speaker. Diane said the Commission will put together questions in advance of the meeting and asked the Commissioners to start thinking about issues of concern regarding youth in detention/placement.
- E. At the February 2014 retreat, the Commission voted to have its meetings from 7 pm-8:30 pm and then have committee meetings starting at 8:30pm. Diane said the Commission is unable to do that because it cannot get the large meeting room at 7 pm.

### III. Old Business

- A. Minutes from September meeting were approved.
- B. The Commission discussed a letter the Care Custody and Placement Committee wrote to George Leventhal of the County Council regarding the Office of Legislative Oversight's December 2013 report titled *Youth and Work in Montgomery County* that recommended the creation of a task force to create a career pathways system for disconnected youth. The letter asks for the status of the creation of that task force. Birdie Pieczenik stated that if the task force does not exist then she would recommend that language be added to the letter to say that the Commission will actively work to make sure one is established. Mike Gruenberg asked whether the County Council had voted on the recommendations raised in the report. Susan Farg replied that the County Council has approved the recommendations detailed in the report but that the task force has not been established. The letter was approved by the Commission.
- C. The Commission discussed changing one of its public citizen-member positions to a position for a youth or adult consumer of juvenile services. Mike Gruenberg stated that it would be beneficial to have the insight of someone who is directly affected by the juvenile justice system. He said it would be difficult to get a juvenile currently in the system but he wondered if it would be possible to get a young adult that recently came out of the system. Stacey stated that she does family engagement and noted that it would be intimidating for a single person to walk into this room. She recommended opening up 3 or 4 positions and suggested that perhaps the Commission could even offer them a stipend.

Francha Davis stated that the Commission has citizen positions open for all to apply. She suggested recruiting specific types of people for those positions rather than limiting the Commission to specific types of individuals. Diane agreed

and stated that it is hard to fill vacancies on the Commissions. Mike Subin agreed and said it would be better to target the types of people we wanted on the Commission. Carlean responded that if positions are not set aside, they will not get filled. Mike Subin responded that it might be better to have a policy to go after certain types of Commissioners. That gives the Commission the most flexibility. Diane echoed those sentiments.

Perry Paylor asked whether the Commission could get the various departments to send a notice out when there is a vacancy. The group voiced some concern about DJS sending a notice out to students that are still active in the juvenile justice system.

Elijah Wheeler added there were plenty of organizations that would be willing to sit at the table such as the Evening Reporting Center. He added that for those organizations to sit at the table there needs to be appropriate training for the Commissioners. He stated that the Commissioners sometimes use certain words that might be upsetting to parents or youth that have more of a direct connection to the juvenile justice system.

Captain James Humphries stated that we would want someone that graduated from the system recently enough where they could speak about current conditions. Persons over 25 would be talking about outdated programs. Commissioners also mentioned that youth on probation could present a conflict of interest for many of the agency members.

Diane said right now the Commission does not have any vacancy announcements but when they do have one, they will make sure it goes out to more agencies. Mike Subin suggested talking about this issue again at the February retreat.

- D. The Commission's Annual Report was brought up for approval. Stacey asked whether she could approve the report given that she was not a member during the relevant time period. Carlean and Diane said that she could. The Commission approved the Annual Report. Stacey abstained from the vote.

#### **IV. Committee Reports**

##### **A. Care, Custody and Placement**

The Committee discussed the task force letter that the Commission approved. The goal of the letter was to get the task force established and for the Commission to be given a position on the task force. Chris said that the Care, Custody and Placement Committee is not going to wait for a response from the County Council. Instead,

Carlean and Mike Gruenberg are planning to meet with Council President George Leventhal soon.

The Committee also talked about issues related to education. Karen Gross brought the Committee up to speed on the transferability of credits for detained juveniles. The Committee also hopes to meet with Council President Leventhal on this issue.

Council President Leventhal and Councilmember Craig Rice are both focused on education and mental health issues for juveniles, and the Commission will be scheduling meetings with both. Carlean said that before they meet with them, they would like to discuss the issue internally so that the discussion will be productive. A telephone conference with Committee members should be held to develop an agenda prior to the meetings. Diane suggested that someone from the Mental Health Advisory Committee attend. Members from the Government and Community Relations Committee are interested in attending the meeting with Craig Rice.

## **B. Government and Community Relations**

Barbara Holtz reported that the Committee spent some time on formulating a letter on budget priorities and also discussed school avoidance and substance abuse issues. The Committee also discussed downsizing the populations of the residential facilities but the question was whether the money would follow the kids.

## **V. Additional Announcements**

- A.** Matt Paris from the Evening Reporting Center announced that Lead for Life will be having their annual benefit for the youth at Noyes at the Lincoln Park Community Center on November 22. They are always looking for volunteers if anyone is interested.
- B.** Noyes remains closed at this time for renovations and is slated to reopen in December.

## **VI. Meeting Adjourned at 9pm**